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ABSTRACT

Ingratiation as defined by Jones (1965; Jones and Worman, 1973) is "a class of strategic behaviors illicitly designed to influence a particular other person concerning the attractiveness of one's personal qualities." This definition of ingratiation and the connotations of unethical behavior associated with the word make the topic of ingratiation an unusual area of interest for a counselor. But if we consider ingratiation as a tactic to enhance the counselor's power of social influence or to reduce the client's dependence, it becomes less unusual. A counselor operating from Strong's theory of counseling as a two phase social influence process may use ingratiation to augment his social influence power over the client so as to be able to ultimately influence the client to modify his behavior or attitudes. In this sense ingratiation does not involve unethical behavior for the counselor is using the tactic not to benefit himself but in order to increase his attractiveness to the client in order to help the client and to meet his contractual agreement with the client. (Author)

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INGRATIATION: ITS IMPLICATIONS FOR COUNSELING

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But if we consider ingratiation as a tactic to enhance the counselor's power of social influence or to reduce the client's dependence, it becomes less unusual. A counselor operating from Strong's theory of counseling as a two phase social influence process may use ingratiation to augment his social influence power over the client so as to be able to ultimately influence the client to modify his behavior or attitudes.

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A client too may use ingratiation. For example, he may behave in a manner he feels will optimize the chances that the counselor will do something for him, e.g. sign a card permitting the student to drop a course.

These illustrations suggest that ingratiation can and in actual practice probably is used by both the counselor and the client in the counseling relationship.

In the counseling literature there can be found research investigating some of the variables associated with ingratiation. For example Strong, Schmidt, and colleagues studied how a counselor's self-presentation influences the client's perceptions of and responses to the counselor.

So we see that ingratiation while evoking initial negative reactions may be one way a counselor can manage his behavior to achieve social influence power with the client, and one way in which researchers can look at the counseling process.

The remainder of this paper will focus upon the implications the ingratiation literature holds for counseling practice and research.[1] To write this paper 103 studies were reviewed.[2] To organize this paper the four tactical classes of ingratiation described by Jones (1964, Jones and Wortman, 1973) will be used. These classes are other enhancement, opinion conformity, rendering favors, and self-presentation.

The general implications that may be drawn from the research on these four tactical classes are that a counselor who is

1 Due to space limitations only possible uses of ingratiation tactics by counselors not clients will be used.

2. These references are listed in an unpublished seminar paper, Ingratation:Its Implications for Counseling, by M.L McKivigan, The Ohio State University, 1974.

positive towards the client or one who agrees with the client or who performs favors for the client or who presents himself as similar to the client is better liked by the client than the counselor who fails to perform these behaviors.

If these implications are supported, it would seem reasonable to structure the common practices of counseling so as to maximize the usefulness of ingratiation tactics. For example a counselor may be able to increase his attractiveness to the client by using one of the strategies suggested by research in the four tactical area in explaining and dealing with the agency's assignment of counselors to clients, the therapy rationale and procedures, and fee setting.

Of course these suggestions need to be developed further and need to be experimentally and clinically verified because extrapolation from one situation, the social psychology laboratory to another, the counseling practice, can only be suggestive and rarely perfectly predictive, and because the ingratiation literature is neither complete nor free from conflicting findings.

Despite the conflicts in the research findings there seems to be three major factors moderating the effectiveness of ingratiation tactics. These factors are (1) the perceived intention of the ingratiator, (2) the judged appropriateness of the ingratiation attempt, and (3) the self-esteem of the target person, the person being ingratiated. Implications derived from research investigating the moderating effects of these factors on the four tactical classes follows.

Regarding the first factor, the perceived intention of the ingratiator, the implication is that if the target person-be he counselor or client-perceives the other, the ingratiator, as acting in a given manner in order to receive a benefit, the target person sees the ingratiator as less honest, attractive, and intellegent than the ingratiator who does not appear so self-serving.

Entering into the judgement of the intent is the perceived appropriateness of the ingratiator's act. For example in the favor giving class a favor is seen as appropriate if it does not appear motivated by a desire to gain something in return. A counselor who performs a favor for a client like excessively reducing fees may be seen as behaving inappropriately and in fact may arouse more suspicion than attraction in the client. However a counselor who performs a small but acknowledged favor like briefly extending the interview hour for the client may be better liked as a result of this act.

Two implications that may be derived from the research on intent and other enhancement are the following. One is that clients actually receiving the feedback may like the positive evaluators and dislike the negative evaluators more than persons merely observing the interaction. How the changing status of participant and observer of a client in a group or family counseling situation influences his attraction to the counselor is an interesting question that needs to be investigated.

The second implication is that once a counselor has built a positive relationship with the client, he(the counselor) may acknowledge his intent to persuade without reducing the effectiveness of the influence attempt but before a relationship is established more subtle techniques of influence may be more effective.

The research on perceived intent and the remaining two tactical areas of self-presentation and opinion conformity is limited but it supports the conclusions noted above that a perception of manipulative intent negates attraction enhancement.

The second moderating factor is the judged appropriateness of the ingratiating attempt. Appropriateness as suggested earlier involves the perceived role requirements associated with the ingratiator's position and with the circumstances surrounding the ingratiation attempt.

In the other enhancement class there is some support for the folk beliefs that a person who is positive about all things and all people, and a person who is totally positive about another person possesses less power to increase his attractiveness to others than does a more discerning person. These findings are particularly relevant for counselors, because some counseling research suggests that counselors are perceived as warm and friendly but less intelligent than some other groups of helpgivers. If counselors are indeed perceived this way, it may be difficult for a client to accept the counselor's positivity towards him. If the counselor can make himself appear more discriminating his assessment of the client may hold more value for the client. A counselor may also make himself seem more discerning if he acknowledges some

minor fault in the client that the client is already aware of and is able to accept criticism of. Building himself as discerning by criticizing other people however may be dangerous for the counselor in that he may then reduce his perceived trustworthiness and reliability.

The research regarding appropriateness and the next tactical class, opinion conformity suggests several tacts a counselor may employ to augment his social influence power. For instance a counselor who appears discerning, that is, does not agree with everything a client says or does, may be perceived as more attractive than a counselor who agrees or disagrees totally with the client. Another strategy is the following. The counselor may infer the client's attitudes from his demeanor and dress, then before the client can actually state his own beliefs, he (the counselor) may present those values he thinks he and the client share.

The research regarding appropriateness and the third tactical class, favor giving implies that a counselor who is very formal or is in a very formal setting may arouse more suspicion than attraction performing favor for the client, particularly a favor not associated with the counseling task. On the other hand, a counselor who is in a more casual setting who performs a favor may increase the likelihood that the client when asked will return the favor, e.g.by carrying out a homework assignment.

The general implications derived from studies investigating appropriateness and the last tactical class, self-presentation include the following. A counselor's similarity to the client on a desirable trait may enhance attraction but similarity on an undesirable and relatively uncommon trait like finger nail biting may

reduce attraction. A counselor may make himself more attractive to the client by admitting a fault within himself that is unrelated to either his counseling skills or the client's concerns. A counselor in a more formal setting may enhance his attractiveness by offering some less personal self-disclosures than a counselor who is a peer of the client. Offering an intermediate number of self-disclosures may be more attraction enhancing than offering none or many self-disclosure.

The research examining the moderating effect of the third factor self-esteem is far from definitive. The research suggests that with a client with low self-esteem the counselor initially should be more positive about the client. To support his positivity the counselor should cite specific and concrete examples of the client's strengths and successes. Other suggestions are the following. Regarding homework and client progress the results of which may be either ambiguous or ego involving or both, the counselor may increase his attractiveness more by offering positive rather than negative feedback. If an evaluation follows a reduction in the client's self-esteem caused for example by an unexpected fallure in an examination or a relationship, the counselor may enhance his attractiveness by offering positive feedback to the client.

The research regarding self-esteem and the three other tactical classes is limited. It does suggest that if a counselor commits a blunder like knocking some papers off his desk, he may be less well regarded by a client with low self-esteem even though the accident may have made him more similar to the client.

Perhaps one way a counselor could use to ingratiate himself with a client with low self-esteem is to request a favor like completing a test battery for the counselor's research. This favor indicates that like the client the counselor too needs assistance but preserves the counselor's role status.

This presentation of the implications ingratiation holds for counseling is not complete, yet it suggests areas in which counselors may want to investigate further in the counseling laboratory and in actual practice.

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